John Held, Jr. was a farm boy from Salt Lake City who moved to New York where he developed a unique drawing style which appeared in many famous magazines and came to symbolize the 1920s. His short-skirted flappers in their cloche hats and beads and his baggypants shieks with their raccoon coats and their hip flasks set the tone for a lot of the comic art of the decade. Held became a high roller, giving parties at his country estate near Westport, Ct. Born January 10, 1889, Held grew up in a two room adobe house with a lean-to kitchen. His father made his living as an engraver, while he played the cornet and led his own band for his own pleasure. John Held, Sr. invented a fountain pen and for a while the family lived over the Held Pen Shop. His mother, Annie, was the daughter of a stage carpenter. An amateur actress, she met John Senior at a church social. The Helds were Mormon farmers. John was the oldest of six children. His father was his first art teacher. Later he studied with the painter/sculptor Mahonri Young, a grandson of Brigham Young, but he didn't graduate from high school and he had no formal training in art. The first money He made with his art was for a block print for the Politz Candy Kitchen on Main Street. He got $9. At 14, he was copyboy for the Salt Lake TRIBUNE, and at 15, he sold his first drawing to the old LIFE, a humor magazine. At 16, he was a regular cartoonist for the paper, where he was later joined by his friend and colleague Harold Ross. Held and Ross first met on the student newspaper at Westside High School. When Ross took over THE NEW YORKER, he remembered Held's block prints and solicited him to do some work for the mag. Held married myrtle Jennings, society editor of the TRIBUNE in 1910. Two years later he went alone to New York with four bucks in his pocket. He shared a studio with Hal Burrows, doing streetcar ads and saved his money to sent for Myrtle. He worked in the ad department of John Wanamaker and spent his evenings drawing. By 1915, his work was appearing in JUDGE, LIFE, SMART SET, and VANITY FAIR. As he started to make better money, he hung out at the right clubs, places like Delmonico's, where he met people like playwright Marc Connelly. When Held took off for Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, in April of 1917, assigned artist on an expedition, Myrtle sent him his walking papers. Marriage to an artist wasn't for her. Returning to New York in 1918, Held came into his own as a cover artist. He married Ada "Johnny" Johnson that year. She was ten years his senior. They moved into a house on Grindstone Hill in rural Weston, Connecticut on the outskirts of the Westport Art Colony. By 1922, Held's drawings of flappers were joined to the short stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald [In TALES OF THE JAZZ AGE, Scribner's]. In August of 1922 JUDGE ran a full page called "*a Flapper's day.*"

Several factors combined to escalate Held's success. In the 20s before talkies, before radio and long before television--magazines were still in their golden age and humor mags were in their heyday. They were the great mass medium for entertainment. In the 20s, youth, which had fought the great war, took over. Prohibition began in 1920 as Warren G. Harding took office, and the whole country seemed to discover not just booze but sex. Held drew his conception of these things and the style caught on and made him an admired artistic hero of the time. The money rolled in and Held and Johnny moved to a better home and set out to live the good life. He had his own golf course, a Chinese cook, assorted farm hands, horses, dogs, peacocks, and a pair of mules named Abercrombie and Fitch. He plowed and planted and lived the life of a real farmer when he wasn't at the drawing board meeting a deadline. He bought a vacation home in Florida, but never got around to going there after it was bought. He found he had to work more and more to keep up with his new life style and it was wearing him down. Partying and work did not mesh and Held was often at odds with Johnny who liked to dress herself to the teeth and party all night.

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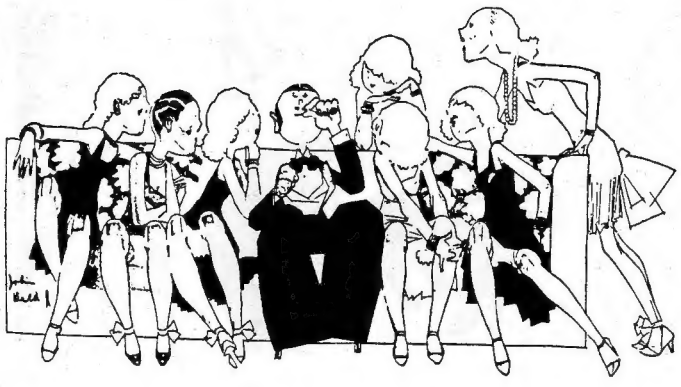
On March 26, 1925, Held was thrown from his wagon and kicked in the head by his panicky Percheron mare. He had a bad fracture and was not expected to live, but his strong physique pulled him through. Hearst hired Held in 1926 to do MERELY MARGY and soon he was getting a quarter of a million a year from Hearst. At the same time, he continued to collect from the New Yorker and numerous ad accounts. He was a fast worker. He would finish 20 drawings by lunch and head for the Coffee House Club. There he hung out with people like Rockwell Kent, Don Marquis, and Rube Goldberg. Sometimes he stopped at the Algonquin. He was not a regular member of the Round Table but he knew Robert Sherwood, Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Harold Ross and the others. Held became a major celebrity. He was even persuaded to run for Congress on the Democratic ticket in Connecticut's fourth district. In 1927, Vanity Fair put John Held on their Hall of Fame list.

On October 24, 1929, the stock market collapsed, and so did Held's career. As the depression set in, hemlines fell and women's skirts reached almost to the ankle, a regression to Victorianism. The cover of LIFE on November 9, 1929, had a drawing of Russell Patterson showing women in long skirts. Held couldn't draw women in long skirts. The image just didn't work for him. He lost his account with Hearst and soon other magazines began to turn down his work. He was estranged from Johnny who he said had made him famous when he really didn't want to be famous. He had a severe "nervous breakdown" in the spring of 1931 and was laid up for a time at the Barnes Sanitarium in Stamford, Connecticut. His art contracts lost, Held turned to writing. His first book of stories, GRIM YOUTH, was out by 1930. The stories detail selfish, pretentious and cruel behavior and the characters are nothing like the free and easy flappers of Held's mid-twenties art. The depression was not fun for the shieks and flappers. Held was rejected by the thirties. He remarried, a beauty queen from Texas named Gladys Moore whom he met when he was judging a pageant in Galveston. He went west and even tried to get into movie writing. What got Held out of his suicidal bent in the 30s was his move into theater. He designed the sets for the hit, HELLZAPOPPIN, though he was not listed on the program because of elapsed Union dues. In 1937, he hosted the radio show, "*The Varsity Show*" for NBC. He was sculpting at the time and he did a show of his horses in 1939. In 1940, Harvard invited him as artist-in-residence and he held the same position later at the University of Georgia. In 1942, Held married his fourth wife, Margaret Schuyler Janes. They moved to a farm in Belmar, New Jersey. Held's widowed mother, Annie, came there to live, and later, his estranged daughter, Judy, was reunited with him. Held was experiencing a renewed interest from the public when he died on March 2, 1958. The Smithsonian did a travelling retrospective called "*John Held's America: Flappers, The Jazz Age, and Beyond.*" A lot of Held's originals are held in the collection of Mrs. John Held, Jr.

Information for this piece is from Dorothy and John Tarrants' "*It was the Jazz Age and John Held Jr. Drew it and Loved it,*"



UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG
Once again I have revised my catalog of underground comix. $1 gets you a listing of 700 titles, including reading copies and rarities, 'homegrowns' and major titles. CRUMB, BODE, CORBEN, and SPIEGELMAN are all here.
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COMIX PLUGOLA

What's happening with Joe Bob Briggs? Send him an SASE at POB 33, Dallas, TX 75221 and get his schedule.* DEADBEAT has moved to 1943 Page St, #2, San Francisco, CA 94117. $10 gets you four issues of this art and poetry tab. Artists include Spain and R. K. Sloane.* Robert Crumb's Jack Kerouac t-shirt is $13.99 PP from Water Row Press, POB 438, Sudbury, MA 01776. All sizes.* TRUE CRIME TALES, 8 pp, mini, is .25/st from Randy Paske, 656 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741.* CEREBUS 105 beings a new story, ASCENSION'S END. And don't miss THE PUMA BLUES series from Aardvark-Vanaheim. Excellent naturalist art.* WIMMEN'S COMICS 12 is out from Renegade in 3-D. Carol Lay did the cover.* Dell Barras AGENT UNKNOWN 1 from Renegade.* EL VIBORA 93 is $7 pp from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.* Hal Hargit has resumed control of Ozone Press, POB 95588, Seattle, WA 98145-2588. David Tosh is now at POB 64605, Dallas, TX 75206-0605. TOXIC DUMP COMIX mini is .25/st from him.* PLANET ELZON is $3.75 from Kenny Moran, 244 Balmoral, Wpg, Man., Canada R3C 1X6. S. Clay Wilson has 30 seconds on MTV in 1988.* Postage goes to a quarter in April, so be prepared to further subsidize the rich. -CLAY GEERDES